



TOWN OF MANSFIELD
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY QUALITY OF LIFE
Monday, October 25, 2004
Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
Conference Room B

Minutes

Present: A. Hawkins, A. Whitham Blair, H. Koehn

Staff: M. Berliner, S. Cox, M. Hart

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Council member Hawkins called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

2. Opportunity for Public to Address the Committee

None

3. October 11, 2004 Meeting Minutes

The committee tabled the discussion of the minutes until the next meeting.

4. Review Recent Law Enforcement Activity

SGT Sean Cox, Mansfield's Resident State Trooper Supervisor, reported on recent law enforcement activity. Since this past August, the office has made approximately 60 arrests for violations of the minors in possession of alcohol statute. The office has also issued roughly 90 citations for violations of the town's open container ordinance. In addition, our police have made several incidental arrests in the vicinity of Carriage House Apartments and Celeron Square.

From his perspective, we are making some progress but not getting the results we would like to achieve with respect to curbing violent and disruptive behavior associated with student parties and gatherings. Carriage House has agreed to execute a standard

letter of complaint for trespass, which would enable the police to cite individuals for trespass unless they are a resident or an identified guest. The problem, however, is that the letter would not apply to the road itself, as it is public. In order to discourage traffic on the road, the police are checking for seatbelt violations and warning the occupants of the trespass provision. Hopefully, the letter of trespass mechanism will prove successful, and can be applied for the next Spring Weekend event.

As it is getting colder, the weather is proving to be an asset in discouraging outdoor gatherings. Carriage House management has been cooperative. They have hired our officers on private duty and have agreed to use their maintenance personnel to remove abandoned furniture, in order to prevent that from becoming a fire accelerant. In addition, we have asked management to consider removing the dumpsters in exchange for a compactor. Carriage House has purchased another bike for our officers to use, which enables the officers to arrive at a scene quickly and unannounced. We are also using an unmarked car for the same purpose.

Alan Hawkins stated that he thought our police have done a very good job in setting the tone for the students.

SGT Cox also discussed the recent disciplinary hearings at UConn. Where the police have a criminal case pending, the officers need to be careful about what statements they make in an administrative hearing to prevent damaging the criminal case.

On another matter, the university has pulled the charter for the Chi Pi fraternity stemming from some arrests made during a recent undercover operation. The fraternity members have lost their university housing, but have not been expelled.

Alan Hawkins asked if we had seen any involvement with underage drinking that is not related to UConn. SGT Cox answered that some local school resource officers have lodged complaints with his office.

Helen Koehn asked if it is safe to drive down the roads at night in the Carriage House neighborhood. SGT Cox replied that pedestrian numbers are fewer now, but there is still a lot of weekend traffic.

Helen Koehn asked about the composition of the crowds – students v. non-students. Also, where do non-students park? Martin Berliner stated that, from his perspective, students are the majority of those in attendance but not the majority of those arrested. Non-students park everywhere and anywhere.

SGT Cox added that the office is attempting to publish arrest logs in local papers around the state, to heighten visibility with parents. They have also recommended that parents be invited to witness Spring Weekend. Furthermore, other campuses around the state have followed UConn's lead and have extended the jurisdiction of their respective student codes of conduct to off-campus activities.

Matt Hart asked whether the Housing Authority has hired private duty officers at the nonprofit rate. They have not, but our officers are able to respond quickly.

Al Hawkins stated that he appreciates the efforts that SGT Cox and the officers have made. Law enforcement is not the entire answer, but it is an important element of it.

Helen Koehn asked whether the problem is larger than just the town and the university, and should we request state resources to assist. Martin Berliner answered that the state does pay the majority of the cost for policing on spring weekend, and, more recently, for providing personnel on other weekends throughout the year. From his perspective, the only way to resolve the issue is to get everyone working together. The town has increased its enforcement of criminal laws and municipal ordinances, while the university has increased its application of the student code. For its part, Carriage House has stepped up and has committed resources. The biggest piece now is the students.

Alison Whitham Blair asked about Celeron Square. Martin responded that if the police are successful at Carriage House, the party may very well indeed move to Celeron and we need to be cognizant of that. The addition of the new movie theater on campus and the construction of our new downtown are and will be great additions to the community, but will only do so much to curb unruly behavior. We still need to more recreation activities for students, and it is unlikely that the campus will ever be re-opened for drinking.

5. Additional Comments to Staff Proposal

Alan Hawkins commented that he thought the draft proposal has a lot of good ideas – the challenge will be to implement them.

Martin Berliner asked the committee to continue to review the draft recommendations, and to present any comments to Matt Hart or himself.

6. Other

None

7. Next Steps and Meeting

The committee scheduled its next meeting for 6:30 p.m. on November 8, 2004.

8. Adjournment

The committee adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Hart
Assistant Town Manager